

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 774

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, YO, UR

SUBJECT: YUGOSLAV-SOVIET MEDIA RELATIONS

REF : A. MOSCOW 18423 B. 75 BELGRADE 6774

1. PRESIDENT TITO CRITICIZED YUGOSLAV PRESS IN RECENT INTERVIEW FOR SOMETIMES PUBLISHING THINGS WHICH NEGATIVELY AFFECT RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND REQUIRE DIPLOMATIC APOLOGIES AS RESULT. PROMINENT YUGOSLAV TV NEWSMAN OBSERVED HOW SOVIETS PLAY THIS MEDIA GAME AT A RECENT LUNCHEON WITH EMBOFFS.

2. HE CANDIDLY SAID HE IS PERSONALLY CAREFUL ABOUT HIS REPORTING ON THE SOVIET UNION SINCE AN UNFLATTERING REMARK IS LIKELY TO BRING AN IMMEDIATE PROTEST FROM THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TO FOREIGN SECRETARY MINIC.

3. THE SOVIET PRESS, HE SAID, IS ALWAYS FULL OF PRAISE FOR YUGOSLAVIA, AND THE SOVIETS INSIST ON CORRESPONDING TREATMENT FROM THE YUGOSLAVS. THE JOURNALIST ADMITTED THE SOVIETS MAKE NO PUBLIC MENTION OF SELF-MANAGEMENT OR NON-ALIGNMENT, BUT CONFIRMED THAT IN DECEMBER GROMYKO HAD ASSURED MINIC PRIVATELY OF HIS RESPECT FOR THESE

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FEATURES OF YUGOSLAV SOCIETY (REFTELS).

4. COMMENT: SOVIET PROTESTS SEEM TO HAVE AN EFFECT ON YUGOSLAV PRESS, WHICH SELDOM CRITICIZES SOVIET UNION DIRECTLY AND ALMOST NEVER MAKES AD HOMINEM ATTACKS ON SOVIET LEADERS. UNLIKE SOVIETS, WE CAN NOT SAY THAT AMERICAN PRESS GIVES YUGOSLAVS UNIFORMLY HIGH MARKS, ALTHOUGH POLITIKA'S US CORRESPONDENT ACKNOWLEDGED IN A RECENT COLUMN THAT YUGOSLAVIA GENERALLY GETS A GOOD PRESS IN THE STATES, WITH A FEW NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS LIKE THE NEW YORK TIMES. YUGOSLAV SENSITIVITY TO DIPLOMATIC PROTESTS CONFIRMS VALIDITY OF OUR POLICY OF KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON YUGOSLAV PRESS AND LETTING THEM KNOW WHEN COVERAGE OF US IS OFFENSIVE.
SWEITZER

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